

THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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THE YELLOW FLAG.

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AUTHOR OF "BLACK SHEEP," "NOBODY'S FORTUNE," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XI. L'AMIE DE LA MAISON.

THE breakfasts in Great Walpole-street, looked upon as meals, were neither satisfactory nor satisfying. Of all social gatherings a breakfast is perhaps the one most difficult to make agreeable to yourself and your guests. There are men at other periods of the day, bright, sociable, and chatty, who insist upon breakfasting by themselves, who glower over their tea and toast, and growl audibly if their solitude is broken in upon; there are women capable of everything in the way of self-sacrifice and devotion except getting up to breakfast. A breakfast after the Scotch fashion, with enormous quantities of Finnan-haddy, chops, steaks, eggs and ham, jam and marmalade, tea and coffee, is a good thing; so is a French breakfast, with two delicate cutlets, or a succulent filet, a savoury omelette, a pint bottle of Nuits, a chasseur, and a cigarette. But the morning meals in Great Walpole-street were not after either of these fashions. After the servants had risen from their knees, and shuffled out of the room in Indian file at the conclusion of morning prayers, the butler re-entered, bearing a hissing silver urn, behind which Mrs. Calverley took up her position, and proceeded to brew a tepid amber-coloured fluid, which she afterwards dispensed to her guests. The footman had followed the butler, bearing, in his turn, a dish containing four thin greasy strips of bacon, laid out side by side in meek resignation, with a portion of kidney keeping guard over them at either end. There was a rack

filled with dry toast, which looked and tasted like the cover of an old Latin dictionary; there was a huge bread-platter, with a scriptural text round its margin, and a huge bread-knife with a scriptural text on its blade; and on the sideboard, far away in the distance, was the shadowy outline of what had once been a ham, and a mountain and a promontory of flesh, with the connecting link between them almost cut away, representing what had once been a tongue. On two or three occasions, shortly after Madame Du Tertre had first joined the household, she mentioned to Mrs. Calverley that she was subject to headaches, which were only to be gotten rid of by taking a sharp half-hour's walk in the air immediately after breakfast—the fact being that Pauline was simply starved, and that if she had been followed she would have been found in the small room of Monsieur Verrey's café in Regent-street, engaged with a cutlet, a pint of Beaune, and the *Siccle* newspaper. To John Calverley, also, these gruesome repasts were most detestable, but he made up for his enforced starvation with a substantial and early luncheon in the City.

On the morning after Humphrey Statham's departure for Cornwall, the breakfast-party was assembled in Great Walpole-street. But the host was not among them. He had gone away to his ironworks in the North, as he told his guest: "on his own vagaries," as his wife had phrased it, with a defiant snort: and Mrs. Calverley, Madame Du Tertre, and Martin Gurwood were gathered round the festive board. The two ladies were sipping the doubtful tea, and nibbling the leathery toast, while Mr. Gurwood, who was an early riser, and who, before taking his morning constitutional in Guelph Park, had solaced himself

with a bowl of bread-and-milk, had pushed aside his plate, and was reading out from the Times such scraps of intelligence as he thought might prove interesting. On a sudden he stopped, the aspect of his face growing rather grave, as he said :

"Here is some news, mother, which I am sure will prove distressing to Mr. Calverley, even if his interests do not suffer from the event which it records."

"I can guess what it is," said Mrs. Calverley, in her thin acid voice. "I have an intuitive idea of what has occurred. I always predicted it, and I took care to let Mr. Calverley know my opinion—the Swartmoor Ironworks have failed?"

"No, not so bad as that," said Mr. Gurwood, "nor, indeed, is it any question of the Swartmoor Ironworks. I will tell you what is said, and you will be able to judge for yourself how far Mr. Calverley may be interested." And in the calm, measured tone habitual to him from constant pulpit practice, Martin Gurwood read out the paragraph which had so startled Humphrey Statham on the previous evening.

When Martin Gurwood finished reading, Madame Du Tertre, who had listened attentively, wheeled round in her chair and looked hard at Mrs. Calverley. That lady's placidity was, however, perfectly undisturbed. With her thin bony hand she still continued her employment of arranging into fantastic shapes the crumbs on the table-cloth, nor did she seem inclined to speak until Pauline said :

"To me this seems a sad and terrible calamity: if I, knowing nothing of this unfortunate gentleman, am grieved at what I hear, surely you, madame, to whom he was doubtless well known, must feel the shock acutely."

"I am glad to say," said Mrs. Calverley, coldly, "that I am not called upon to exhibit any emotion in the present instance. So little does Mr. Calverley think fit to acquaint me with the details of his business, that I was not aware that it was in contemplation to establish an agency at Ceylon, nor did I ever hear of the name of the person who, doubtless by his own imprudence, seems to have lost his life."

"You never saw Mr.—Mr.—how is he called, Monsieur Gurwood?"

"Durham is the name given here," said Martin, referring to the newspaper.

"Ah, you never saw Mr. Durham, madame?"

"I never saw him; I never even heard Mr. Calverley mention his name."

"Poor man, poor man," murmured Madame Du Tertre, with downcast eyes; "lost so suddenly, as your Shakespeare says—'sent to his account with all his imperfections on his head.' It is terrible to think of, is it not, Monsieur Martin?"

"To be cut off with our sins yet in-expiated," said Martin Gurwood, not meeting the searching glance riveted upon him, "is, as you say, Madame Du Tertre, a terrible thing. Let us trust this unfortunate man was not wholly unprepared."

"If he were a friend of Mr. Calverley's," hissed the lady at the end of the table, "and he must have been to have been placed in a position of trust, it is, I should say, most improbable that he was fitted for the sudden change."

That morning Madame Du Tertre, although her breakfast had been of the scantiest, did not find it necessary to repair to Verrey's; when the party broke up she retired to her room, took the precaution of locking the door, and having something to think out, at once adopted her old resource of walking up and down.

She said to herself: "The news has arrived, and just at the time that I expected it. He has been bold, and everything has turned out exactly as he could have wished. People will speak kindly of him and mourn over his fate, while he is far away and living happily, and laughing in his sleeve at the fools whose compassion he evokes. What would I give to be there with him on the same terms as those of the old days. I hate this dull British life, this ghastly house, these people, precise, exact, and terrible, I loathe the state of formality in which I live, the restraint and reticence I am obliged to observe! What is it to me to ride in a carriage by the side of that puppet down-stairs, to sit in the huge dull rooms, to be waited upon by the silent solemn servants!" And her eyes blazed with fire as she sang in a soft low voice :

"Les gueux, les gueux,
Sont les gens heureux;
Ils s'aiment entre eux.
Vivent les gueux!"

As she ceased singing she stopped suddenly in her walk, and said, "What a fool I am to think of such things, to dream of what might have been, when all my hope and desire is to destroy what is; to discover the scene of Tom Durham's retreat, and to drive him from the enchanted land where he and she are now residing. And this can only be done by steady continuance in my present life, by passive en-

duration, by never-flagging energy and perpetual observation. Tiens! Have I not done some good this morning, even in listening to the bêtise talk of that silly woman and her sombre son? 'She had never seen Tom Durham,' she said, 'had never heard of him, he has never been brought to the house;' this then gives colour to all that I have suspected. It is, as I imagined, through the influence of the old man Claxton that Tom was nominated as agent of the house of Calverley. Mr. Calverley himself probably knows nothing of him or he would most assuredly have mentioned the name to his wife, have asked him to dinner, after the English fashion, before sending him out to such a position. But no, his very name is unknown to her, and it is evident that he is the sole protégé of Monsieur Claxton—Claxton, from whom the pale-faced woman who is his wife, his mistress—what do I know or care—obtained the money with which Tom Durham thought to buy his silence and his freedom. Not yet, my dear friend, not yet! The game between us promises to be long, and to play it properly with a chance of success will require all my brains and all my patience. But the cards are already beginning to get shuffled into their places, and the luck has already declared on my side."

A few mornings afterwards Mrs. Calverley, on coming down to breakfast, held an open paper in her hand; laying it on the table and pointing at it with her bony finger, when the servants had left the room, she said, "I have an intimation here that Mr. Calverley will return this evening. He has not thought fit to write to me, but a telegram has been received from him at the office; and the head clerk, who, I am thankful to say, still preserves some notion of what is due to me, has forwarded the information."

"Is not this return somewhat unexpected?" asked Pauline, looking inquisitively at her hostess.

"Mr. Calverley's return is never either unexpected or expected by me," said the lady; "he is immersed in business, which I trust may prove as profitable as he expects, though in my father's time——"

"Perhaps," interrupted Martin Gurwood, cutting in to prevent the repetition of that wail over the decadence of the ancient firm which he had heard a thousand times, "perhaps Mr. Calverley's return has on this occasion been hastened by the news of the loss of his agent, which I read out to you the other day? There

is more about it in the paper this morning."

"More! What more?" cried Pauline, eagerly.

"Nothing satisfactory, I am sorry to say. The body has not been found, nor is there any credible account of how the accident happened; the further news is contained in a letter from one of the passengers. It seems that this unfortunate gentleman, Mr. Durham, had even, during the short time which he was on board the ship, succeeded in making himself very popular with the passengers. He had talked to some of them of the importance of the position which he was going out to fill, of his devotion to business, and to his employer; and it is agreed on all sides that the well-known firm of which he was the agent will find it difficult to replace him, so zealous and so interested in their behalf did he show himself. He was one of the last who retired to rest, and when in the morning he did not put in an appearance, nothing was thought of it, as it was imagined—not that he had succumbed to sea-sickness, as he had described himself as an old sailor, who had made many voyages—but that he was fatigued by the exertions of the previous day. Late in the evening, as nothing had been heard of him, the captain resolved to send the steward to his cabin, and the man returned with the report that the door was unlocked, the berth unoccupied, and Mr. Durham not to be found. An inquiry was at once set on foot, and a search made throughout the ship, but without any result. The only idea that could be arrived at was, that finding the heat oppressive, or being unable to sleep, he made his way to the deck, and, in the darkness of the night, had missed his footing and fallen overboard. Against this supposition was the fact that Mr. Durham was not in the least the worse for liquor when last seen, and that neither the officers nor the men on duty throughout the night had heard any splash in the water, or any cry for help. The one thing certain was that the man was gone, and all that could be done was to tranship his baggage at Gibraltar, for return to England, and to make public the circumstances for the information of his friends."

"It seems to me," said Martin Gurwood, as he finished reading, "that unless the drowning of this poor man had actually been witnessed, nothing could be much clearer. He is seen to retire to rest in the night, he is never heard of again, there is no reason why he should attempt self-de-

struction; on the contrary, he is represented as glorying in the position to which he had been appointed, and full of life, health, and spirits."

"There is one point," said Mrs. Calverley, "to which I think exception may be taken, and that is, that he was sober. These sort of persons have, I am given to understand, a great tendency to drink and vice of every description, and the fact that he was probably a boon companion of Mr. Calverley's, and on that account appointed to this agency, makes me think it more than likely that he had a private store of liquor, and was drowned when in a state of intoxication."

"There is nothing in the evidence which has been made public," said Martin Gurwood, in a hard caustic tone, "to warrant any supposition of that kind. In any case, it is not for us to judge the dead and——"

"Perhaps," said Pauline, interposing, to avert the storm which she saw gathering in Mrs. Calverley's knitted brows, "perhaps, when Mr. Calverley returns to-night, he will be able to give us some information on the subject. A man so trusted, and appointed to such a position, must naturally be well known to his employer."

The lamps were lit in the drawing-room, and the solemn servants were handing round the tea, when a cab rattled up to the door, and immediately afterwards John Calverley, enveloped in his travelling-coat and many wrappers, burst into the apartment. He made his way to his wife, who was seated at the Berlin wool frame, on which the Jael and Sisera had been supplanted by a new and equally interesting subject, and bending down, offered her a salute, which she received on the tip of her ear; he shook hands heartily with Martin Gurwood, politely with Pauline, and then discarding his outer garments, planted himself in the middle of the room, smiling pleasantly, and inquired, "Well, what's the news?"

"There is no news here," said Mrs. Calverley, looking across the top of the Berlin wool frame with stony glance; "those who have been careering about the country are most likely to gather light and frivolous gossip. Do you desire any refreshment, Mr. Calverley?"

"No, thank you, my dear!" said John. "I had dinner at six o'clock, at Peterborough—swallowed it standing—cold meat, roll, glass of ale. You know the sort of thing, Martin—hurried, but not bad, you know—not bad!"

"But after such a slight refreshment, Monsieur Calverley," said Pauline, rising and going towards him, "you would surely like some tea?"

"No, thank you, Madame Du Tertre, 'no tea for me. I will have a little—a little something hot later on, perhaps—and you, too, Martin, eh?—no, I forgot, you are no good at that sort of thing. And so," he added, turning to his wife, "you have, you say, no news?"

"Mrs. Calverley does herself injustice in saying any such thing," said Pauline, interposing; "the interests of the husband are the interests of the wife, and, when it is permitted, of the wife's friends; and we have all been distressed beyond measure to hear of the sad fate which has befallen your trusted agent."

"Eh!" said John Calverley, looking at her blankly, "my trusted agent? I don't understand you."

"These celebrated Swartmoor Ironworks are not beyond the reach of the post-office, I presume?" said Mrs. Calverley, with a vicious chuckle.

"Certainly not," said John.

"And telegrams occasionally find their way there, I suppose?"

"Undoubtedly."

"How is it, then, Mr. Calverley, that you have not heard what has been in all the newspapers, that some man named Durham, calling himself your agent, has been drowned on his way to India, where he was going in your employ?"

"Drowned!" said John Calverley, turning very pale, "Tom Durham drowned! Is it possible?"

"Not merely possible, but strictly true," said his wife. "And what I want to know is, how is it that you, buried down at your Swartmoors, or whatever you call them, have not heard of it before?"

"It is precisely because I was buried down there that the news failed to reach me. When I am at the ironworks I have so short a time at my disposal that I never look at the newspapers, and the people at Mincing-lane have strict instructions never to communicate with me by letter or telegram except in the most pressing cases; and Mr. Jeffreys, I imagine, with that shrewdness which distinguishes him, saw that the reception of such news as this would only distress me, while I could be of no possible assistance, and so wisely kept it back until my return."

"I am sure I don't see why you should be so distressed because one of your clerks

got drunk and fell overboard," said Mrs. Calverley. "I know that in my father's time——"

"This Mr. Durham must have been an especially gifted man, I suppose, or you would scarcely have appointed him to such an important berth? Was it not so?" asked Pauline.

"Yes," said Mr. Calverley, hesitating. "Tom Durham was a smart fellow enough."

"What I told you," said Mrs. Calverley, looking round. "A smart fellow, indeed! but not company for his employer's wife, whatever he may have been for——"

"He was a man whom I knew but little of, Jane," said John Calverley, with a certain amount of sternness in his voice; "but he was introduced to me by a person of whom I have the highest opinion, and whom I wished to serve. On this recommendation I took Mr. Durham, and the little I saw of him was certainly in favour of his zeal and brightness. Now, if you please, we will change the conversation."

That night, again, Madame Du Tertre might have been seen pacing her room. "The more I see of these people," she said to herself, "the more I learn of the events with which my life is bound up, so much the more am I convinced that my first theory was the right one. This Monsieur Calverley, the master of this house—what was his reason for being annoyed, contrarié, as he evidently was, at being questioned about Durham? Simply because he himself knew nothing about him, and could not truthfully reply to the pestering inquiries of that *anatomie vivante*, his wife, as to who he was, and why he had not been presented to her, the reigning queen of the great firm! Was I not right there in my anticipations? 'He was introduced to me,' he said, 'by a person of whom I have the highest opinion and whom I wished to serve; that person, without doubt, was Claxton—Claxton, the old man, who, in his turn, was the slave of the pale-faced woman, whom Tom Durham had befuddled! A bon chat, bon rat! They are well suited, these others, and Messrs. Calverley and Claxton are the dupes, though, perhaps'—and she stopped pondering, with knitted brow—"Mr. Calverley knows all, or rather half, and is helping his friend and partner in the matter! I will take advantage of the first opportunity to press this subject further home with Monsieur Calverley, who is a sufficiently simple *bonhomme*, and perhaps I may learn something that may be useful to me from him."

The opportunity which Pauline sought occurred sooner than she expected. On the very next evening, Martin Gurwood being away from home, attending some public meeting on a religious question, and Mrs. Calverley being detained in her room finishing some letters which she was anxious to despatch, Pauline found herself in the drawing-room before dinner, with her host as her sole companion.

When she entered she saw that Mr. Calverley had the newspaper in his hand, but his eyes were half closed and his head was nodding desperately. "You are fatigued, monsieur, by the toils of the day," she said. "I fear I interrupted you?"

"No," said John Calverley, jumping up, "not at all, Madame Du Tertre; I was having just forty winks, as we say in English, but I am quite refreshed and all right now, and am very glad to see you."

"It must be hard work for you, having all the responsibility of that great establishment in the City on your shoulders."

"Well, you see, Madame Du Tertre," said John, with a pleasant smile, "the fact is I am not so young as I used to be, and though I work no more, indeed considerably less, I find myself more tired at the end of the day."

"Ah, monsieur," said Pauline, "that is the great difference between the French and English commerce as it appears to me. In France our *négociants* have not merely trusted clerks such as you have here, but they have partners who enjoy their utmost confidence, who are as themselves, in fact, in all matters of their business."

"Yes, madame, but that is not confined to France; we have exactly the same thing in England. My house is Calverley and Co.; Co. stands for 'company,' *vous savvy*," said John with a great dash at airing his French.

"Ah, you have partners?" asked Pauline.

"Well, no, not exactly," said John, evasively, looking over her head and rattling the keys in his trousers-pockets.

"I think I heard of one Monsieur Claxton."

"Eh," said John, looking at her disconcertedly, "Claxton, eh? Oh, yes of course."

"And yet it is strange, that intimate, *lié*, bound up as this Monsieur Claxton must be with you in your affairs, you have never brought him to this house—Madame Calverley has never seen him. I should like to see this Monsieur Claxton, do you know? I should——"

But John Calverley stepped hurriedly forward and laid his hand upon her arm. "Stay, for God's sake," he said, with an expression of terror in every feature; "I hear Mrs. Calverley's step on the stairs. Do not mention Mr. Claxton's name in this house; I will tell you why some other time—only—don't mention it!"

"I understand," said Pauline, quietly; and when Mrs. Calverley entered the room she found her guest deeply absorbed in the photographic album.

That night the party broke up early. Mr. Calverley, though he used every means in his power to disguise the agitation into which his conversation with Pauline had thrown him, was absent and embarrassed, while Pauline herself was so occupied in thought over what had occurred, and so desirous to be alone in order that she might have the opportunity for full reflection, that she did not as usual encourage her hostess in the small and spiteful talk in which that lady delighted, and none were sorry when the clock, striking ten, gave them an excuse for adjournment.

"Allons donc," said Pauline, when she had once more regained her own chamber, "I have made a great success to-night, by mere chance work too, arising from my keeping my eyes and ears always open. See now! It is evident, from some cause or other—why I cannot at present comprehend—that this man, Monsieur Calverley, is frightened to death lest his wife should see his partner! What does it matter to me—the why or the wherefore? the mere fact of its being so is sufficient to give me power over him. He is no fool; he sees the influence which I have already acquired over Mrs. Calverley, and he knows that were I just to drop a hint to that querulous being, that jealous wretch, she would insist on being made known to Claxton, and having all the business transactions between them explained to her. Threaten Monsieur Calverley with that, and I can obtain from him what I will, can be put on Tom Durham's track, and then left to myself to work out my revenge in my own way! Ah, Monsieur and Madame Mogg, of Poland-street, how can I ever be sufficiently grateful for the chance which sent me to lodge in your mansarde, and first gave me the idea of making the acquaintance of the head of the great firm of Calverley and Company!"

The next morning, when, after breakfast, and before starting for the City, Mr. Calverley went into the dull square apart-

ment behind the dining-room, dimly lighted by a window overlooking the leads, which he called his study, where some score of unreadable books lay half reclining against each other on shelves, but the most used objects in which were a hat and clothes-brush, some walking-canes and umbrellas, he was surprised to find himself closely followed by Madame Du Tertre; more surprised when that lady closed the door quietly, and turning to him said, with meaning:

"Now, monsieur, five words with you."

"Certainly, madame," said John, very much taken aback; "but is not this rather an odd place—would not Mrs. Calverley think—?"

"Ah, bah," said Pauline, with a shrug and a gesture very much more reminiscent of the *dame de comptoir* than of the *dame de compagnie*. "Mrs. Calverley has gone down-stairs to battle with those wretched servants, and she is, as you know, safe to be there for half an hour. What I have to say will not take ten minutes—shall I speak?"

John bowed in silence, looking at the same time anxiously towards the study-door.

"You do not know much of me, Monsieur Calverley, but you will before I have done. I am at present—and am, I fancy, likely to remain—an inmate of your house; I have established myself in Mrs. Calverley's good graces, and have, as you must know very well, a certain amount of influence with her; but it was you to whom I made my original appeal; it is you whom I wish to retain as my friend."

John Calverley, with flushing cheeks, and constantly recurring glance towards the door, said, "that he was very proud, and that if he only knew what Madame Du Tertre desired——"

"You shall know at once, Monsieur Calverley: I want you to accept me as your friend, and to prove that you do so by giving me your confidence."

John Calverley started.

"Yes, your confidence," continued Pauline. "I have talent and energy, and, when I am trusted, could prove myself a friend worth having; but I am too proud to accept half-confidences, and where no trust is reposed in me I am apt to ally myself with the opposite faction. Why not trust in me, Monsieur Calverley—why not tell me all?"

"All—what all, madame?"

"About your partner, Monsieur Clax-

ton, and the reason why you do not bring him——”

“Hush! pray be silent, I implore you!” said John Calverley, stepping towards her and taking both her hands in his. “I cannot imagine,” he said, after a moment’s pause, “what interest my business affairs can have for you; but since you seem to wish it, you shall know them all; only not here and not now.”

“Yes,” said Pauline, with provoking calmness, “in the City, perhaps?”

“Yes; at my office in Mining-lane.”

“And when?”

“To-morrow week, at four o’clock; come down there then and I will tell you all you wish to know.”

“Right,” said Pauline, slipping out of the room in an instant. And before John Calverley let himself out at the street door, he heard the drawing-room piano ringing out the grand march in the *Prophète* under her skilful hands.

Three days afterwards a man came up from the office with a letter for Mrs. Calverley. It was from her husband, stating he had a telegram calling him down to Swartmoor at once, and requesting that his portmanteau might be packed and given to the messenger. This worthy was seen and interrogated by the mistress of the house. “He knew nothing about the telegram,” he said, “but when his master gave him the letter he looked bothered and dazed-like.”

Mrs. Calverley shook her head, and opined that her prophecies aient the downfall of the Swartmoor Ironworks were about to be realised. But Pauline did not seem to be much put out at the news. “It is important, doubtless,” she said to herself, “and he must go; but he will return in time to keep his appointment with me.”

The day arrived and the hour, and Pauline was punctual to her appointment, but Mr. Calverley had not arrived, though one of the clerks said he had left word that it was probable he might return on that day. That was enough for Pauline; she would await his arrival.

An hour passed.

Then there was a great tearing up and down stairs and hurrying to and fro, and, presently, when a white-faced clerk came in to get his hat, he stared to see her there. He had forgotten her, though it was he who had ushered her into the waiting-room.

“There was no use in her remaining

there any longer,” he said; “the head clerk, Mr. Jeffreys, had been sent for to Great Walpole-street, and, though nobody knew anything positive, everybody felt that something dreadful had occurred.”

ROUND THE TEA-URN IN CENTRAL RUSSIA.

“THAT’S right, barin;* just in time! Masha (Mary), my little dove, bring out the samovar (tea-urn) if it’s ready; I’ve got the black bread and sausage, and the salted cucumbers, all laid out; and now there’s nothing wanting but the guests!”

So vociferates, with a grin of welcome at my approach, a tall, wiry, bearded man (my host for the time being), in a coarse red shirt of cotton print, and baggy blue trousers tucked into the huge boots that reach to his knee. We are going to have an open-air tea-party in front of our hut, and I have returned from my afternoon “constitutional” just in time to see the guests arrive.

This is just the time to hold an out-door feast, and just the place in which to spread it. The air is cool and fresh after the scorching heat of the day, and up here, on the brow of the hill, the sweet evening breeze comes to us pleasantly. Along the green incline, and in the greener valley below, the little white log-huts lie dotted like scattered dice, each with its tiny plot of garden and its low square palisade. To the northward mile after mile of forest lies outspread in the glow of the sunset, tree-top after tree-top catching the light, till all is one blaze of glory; while far away on the south and west the soft, dreamy, sunny uplands of Central Russia melt, in curve after curve of smooth green slope, into the golden haze of the sky.

Just the evening for an *al fresco* repast, if ever there was one; but in any season, should you happen to be living in a Russian village, it is better (if possible) to take your meals out of doors than in. In summer, it is true, when windows and doors can be left open, matters are not quite so bad; but in winter, what with the barred doors and doubled casements, the stifling heat of the stove, the cracking and groaning of the timbers; what with the spiders, that make a gymnasium of the cross-beams of the roof, and the “tarakans” (black-beetles), which run races across the paste of straw and mud called by courtesy

* Answering to our “sir;” literally “master.”

a floor; what with the reek of animal warmth from the cows, dogs, pigs, and fowls, crammed into the adjoining shed, and the concert of lowing, barking, grunting, and screaming, which serves the human inmates both for matins and even-song, the whole building might pass for Noah's first attempt at an Ark, over-crowded by a false alarm of the Deluge.

But here, at length, come our guests, all five of them; Ivan Miassoff, the butcher, and Alexey Sapogin, the shoemaker, and Vasili Petroff, my host's brother-in-law, with his wife, Pelageya Grigorievna (Pelagia, the daughter of Gregory), a bright, cheery little body, but, like all Russian peasant women, prematurely aged by hard work and exposure; and, last but not least, Sergei Bikoff, the watchman, a huge, red-haired fellow, who has lost, by a frost-bite, what little nose he ever had. Each in turn doffs his cap, and crosses himself before the little gilt-edged picture of Saint Nicholas (my host's patron), which, with a small lamp burning before it, is seen in a corner of the hut through the open door. This done, they seat themselves (I being literally voted into the chair) anywhere and anyhow, one on a low bench, another on a stool, a third on a tub, and my host and hostess upon their "soondook," a huge chest clamped with iron, and painted bright red, which is the pride and glory of every Russian peasant who can afford it, and is bought with sore pinching by many who cannot.

For a time the meal proceeds with silent industry, and one can survey the picturesque group at leisure. These are the famous "Mujiks" of Russia, men superstitious as the ancient Athenians, ignorant as Australian savages, inured to hardships from which a mediæval anchorite would have shrunk; at once gluttons and ascetics; peaceful even to sluggishness, yet capable of the most frightful revenge; able to sustain life on a pittance of food that would starve a British seaman, and to pass whole nights in the depth of winter, wrapped in a sheepskin, outside their master's door; intensely susceptible of kindness, yet ungovernable save by extreme severity; the strangest and most incomprehensible of all the waifs and strays left by the ebb of Asiatic barbarism upon the shore of Europe. Each and all of our guests displayed the broad, flat, sallow, low-browed type of the genuine Russian, except my host, whose tall gaunt frame and prominent features argue an admixture of Cos-

sack blood; but the one thing about them which strikes one at the first glance is their defective physique, the utter want of that solid strength which untravellers writers ignorantly ascribe to them. Broad and bulky, indeed, they are; but the strong outline is poorly and shakily filled in. Whatever might be the natural strength of the Muscovite, it is sapped from the very first by bad diet, by drink, by overwork, and by the constant alternation of fasting and gluttony produced by the ordinances of the Greek Church. His average length of life is barely half that of Western Europe. The total number of able-bodied men, drawn from a population of sixty millions, is not a whit greater than that furnished by the thirty-eight millions of France. The weakness in productive age is such that, whereas in Great Britain the proportion of persons alive between fifteen and sixty is five hundred and forty-eight per thousand (and in Belgium five hundred and eighteen), in Russia it falls as low as two hundred and sixty-five. In a word, I have seen the physical power of the Russian tested in every possible way, and his hardihood tried by every variety of climate, from the Niemen to the Ural Mountains, from the Gulf of Bothnia to Kamiesch Bay. I have taken part in his favourite sports, and measured my strength with his again and again; but all my experience only confirms the original conclusion, that the average Russian, though capable of a passive endurance bordering upon the incredible, possesses little more than half the muscular power of the average Englishman.*

But all this while the feasting has been going vigorously on; the various good things are now disposed of, and the exercise of tongues succeeds to that of teeth. For a time the talk runs chiefly on local matters; how troublesome the wolves were last winter, and what a famous crop of rye there is likely to be this year; how old Oicipoff, the corn-dealer, is going to marry his third wife, and Feodor Nikeetin's eldest boy has been drawn for the conscription; how soon the weather is likely to change, and whether Father Alexander Nikolaievitch (the Emperor) will give us the railway that folks have been talking of making

* I could easily accumulate proofs ad nauseam, but one will suffice. In 1868 out of the total number of conscripts sent up to the various recruiting centres, to supply the annual contingent of eighty-four thousand men, no fewer than forty-four thousand were rejected for disease and other physical defects, not inclusive of short stature.

in these parts. But after a time my host lets drop a remark which tells his guests that I have made the two journeys which are the ne plus ultra of the Mujik—to Kiev and Jerusalem; and forthwith they begin to overwhelm me with questions about the far-away places which they never saw, nor shall see. I describe to them the splendid barbarism of many-towered Constantinople; the broken necklace of the Archipelago, with all its scattered jewels; the lifeless grandeur of the Pyramids; the blank dreariness of the Suez Canal, and the vast rampart of rock that bucklers the naked shore of Arabia; pyramidal Jaffa, bending moodily over the chafing sea; the funereal beauty of the Dead Sea, and the grim loneliness of the Desert of Moab; the fragrant shadow of the countless orange-groves which curtain imperial Damascus; and, lastly, the Holy City itself, clustering within its huge grey rampart, environed by the life-guard of mountains which “stand round about Jerusalem.” As the story proceeds, it is a treat to watch how the hard faces brighten with childlike pleasure, and the rough figures bend forward in eager expectation. This is perhaps the first real and tangible conception of the world around them which has ever reached these brave, simple, untaught souls, to whom their newly-acquired freedom has as yet brought nothing, save the consciousness of their own helplessness. To the poor Mujik everything beyond the narrow circle of his daily wants and occupations is a hopeless blank. His own country is as strange to him as the deserts of Central Africa. Moscow and St. Petersburg are mere names, vaguely suggesting a dim idea of vast and shadowy grandeur, countless leagues away. Upon everything without the frontier of Holy Russia he looks with the same mysterious awe with which the Greek and the Roman regarded that unknown waste of waters which rolled beyond the Pillars of Hercules. In a word, the influence of Western civilisation (despite the fanfaronnades of Russian optimists) has hitherto merely trickled over the surface of the great empire; the mass is still to be penetrated. When I stood, five months ago, upon the verge of the plain of Jericho, and watched the black swirl of the Jordan rushing headlong into the pulseless crystal of the Dead Sea, I looked upon a perfect symbol of the two great divisions of the European family. The energy of the Teutonic races flows like a strong current, turbid, perhaps vio-

lent, overbearing, dark with war and revolution, but still fertilising, full of life, for ever moving onward. The Slavonian world lies like a tideless lake, fenced in on every side—vast, deep, beautiful to look upon, but inert and useless as a buried treasure. That their common work may be done, the two must thoroughly amalgamate; but the time for such fusions is not yet.

“And is Arabia, too, a country of unbelievers?” asks Petroff, as I pause in my recital.

“Yes, they’re all Mahometans down there,” answer I, “and a queer-looking set they are, too—long, lean, brown fellows, with nothing on but cotton drawers and white skull-caps, and every other man an eye out with the sand and the flies. But they’ve got a splendid climate, for all that: fine weather all day long, and—no winter.”

At this terrible announcement, thrown in by me out of malice prepense, the whole circle exchange glances of horror.

“No winter!” exclaims old Bikoff, the watchman, to whose deep tones the loss of his nose adds a double solemnity; “how the devil do they manage to live, then? Well, it’s God’s judgment upon them, the accursed heathens—they don’t deserve to have a winter.”

“Ah, Sergei Mikhailovitch!” whispers Miasoff, “don’t you see that the barin’s making fun of us? No winter! why the thing’s impossible.”

A kind of silence now falls upon the party, in the midst of which I notice Sapogin sidling up to my host, and whispering something in his ear.

“Ay, you are right, Alexey Feodorovitch—I had almost forgotten it. Barin,” he added, turning to me, “you can read, can’t you?”

“Yes, brother, I can read. What then?”

“Why, you see, Dmitrie Ivanoff, the postman, has left us a newspaper, with a capital story in it (so he says) of something that’s been done up in ‘Mother Moscow;’ but, you know, we poor fellows are all “negrāmotni” (unlettered), and Father Arkadi, the priest, can’t come to us to-night: so perhaps you will graciously condescend to read it to us yourself.”

I graciously condescend to do so, and, picking out the marked passage, read the following story—a perfectly true one, be it remarked:

“SCRUPULOUS ACCURACY.—One of the celebrities of the Moscow ballet lately

called upon a local official with a request that he would give her the usual formal permission to take a month's tour in the provinces for the benefit of her health, retaining her salary during the time of furlough. The man in office received her very politely, and asked for her 'written petition.'

"'I have no written petition,' answered the artiste; 'I had no idea that such a thing was necessary!'

"'Not necessary, madam? Why, nothing can be done without it!'

"'What am I to do, then?'

"'Nothing easier. Here are pens, ink, and paper; be so good as to sit down and write while I dictate.'

"The lady obeyed; the petition was written, signed, and folded.

"'And now,' said the representative of justice, 'you have only to deliver it.'

"'To whom?'

"'To whom?' repeated the official, with a slight smile at her simplicity. 'To me, of course!' And taking the petition which he had himself dictated, he produced his spectacles, wiped them carefully, adjusted them upon his nose, read over the whole document as though it were perfectly new to him, docketed and filed it in due form, and then, turning to the impatient danseuse, said, with the utmost gravity, 'Madam, I have read your petition, and regret extremely that I cannot grant it!'

When the general laughter has subsided (for the Mujik is fond of a quiet joke, sub rosa, at the expense of native officialism), I assert my prerogative as chairman by calling upon our entertainer for a song.

"'I'm no singer,' answers the founder of the feast; 'but here's my brother-in-law will do it for you. Vasker, my lad, give us that song you learned up at Peter (St. Petersburg) in the carnival time.'

And Petroff, nothing loth, clears his throat, and trolls out in a deep, and not unmusical voice, the bold, dashing, ungallant song which Lermontoff has made familiar to every reading man in Russia:

THE CIRCASSIAN'S COUNSEL.

Maidens throng our hills, I wot,
Starry night is in their eyes;
Life with them—an envied lot!

But our freedom more we prize.
(CHORUS) Wed not, wed thee not, good youth,
Well my counsel heed!
Here is gold for thee, good youth,
Buy thyself a steed!

He who takes himself a wife
Ill hath chosen, wretch forlorn!
Never rides he to the strife.

Why? because his spouse would mourn!
Wed not, &c.

Fair and false are women all,
Gold will buy thee spouses twain;
He who trusts in them shall fall,
But a steed is priceless gain!
Wed not, &c.

He betrays not—thy good steed!
Flood nor fire with him we fear;
Like the desert blast, his speed
Makes the farthest distance near.
Wed not, &c.

It would startle a stranger to observe with what skill these rough fellows, not one of whom can write his own name, or read it when written, take up their several parts in the chorus, and what a mellow volume of sound they pour forth; but through all the grand swell of the refrain runs that weird undercurrent of melancholy which is characteristic of all Russian music—the wail of an oppressed people, sending up its unspoken prayers, age after age, to the God and Father of all.

"Well done!" say I, as the chant ends; "that's something like a song. But you know the saying, 'After a feast, a song; after a song, a story.' Which of you knows a good one?"

"If you want stories, here's your man," answered old Bikoff, pointing to my host, "he's got a famous stock of 'em. Pavel Ivanovitch (Paul, the son of John,) be good now, and give us the story of Ilia Murometz, Vladimir's champion."

I start involuntarily at the mention of this old acquaintance, the simplest and noblest of the old Slavonic traditions, which every man of our party probably knows from beginning to end. But a Russian will gladly hear the same story ten times over, provided it be a good one; and all dispose themselves to listen attentively, while our chronicler begins as follows:

"Long ago, in the days when Prince Vladimir reigned over Holy Russia, there lived near the town of Murom, in the village of Karatcharovo, a certain peasant, by name Ivan; and he had a son called Ilia, upon whom God had sent a sore sickness, so that he could move neither hand nor foot, but lay like a felled tree. All the village called him 'Ilia the Cripple;' and when any one fell sick, or was struck down by wounds, they used to say, 'He is no more good now than Ivánovitch.' And when men spoke of the great deeds they had done in battle, Ilia hung his head; and when they told of hunting, or wrestling, or running swiftly through the forests, he turned his face to the wall and wept. And so the time went by, and great wars were

waged, and great battles fought, and the warriors of Holy Russia went forth and smote the hosts of the pagan; but Ilia lay helpless in a corner of his hut all the weary, weary, weary year.

"Now, when thirty years were past and gone, Ilia lay outstretched in the sunshine at the door of his hovel one summer evening, and wondered why God had made him so miserable, when everything around him was bright and happy. And as he lay there came towards him three men, dusty and foot-sore, dressed like the beggars who roam from village to village; and the foremost said to him, 'Ilia Ivánovitch, rise up and give us to drink, for we are thirsty!'

"And Ilia answered wondering, 'Brothers, how am I to rise up? neither hand nor foot can I stir!' But the stranger said, again, 'Rise up, I say, and stand upon your feet; for this day God gives you back your strength, and henceforward you shall be no longer Ilia Ivánovitch the Cripple, but Ilia Murometz, the Champion of Holy Russia.'

"His voice was very low and sweet, but it filled the air like the blast of a hurricane through the forest in autumn; and at the sound of it Ilia started up like one aroused from sleep, and brought up from the cellar a cask such as five oxen could not draw, and gave them to drink.

"'Do you feel your strength, Ilia?' asked they. And Ilia answered, 'I feel my strength, and it is as though I could lay one hand upon Kiev, and the other upon Great Novgorod, and turn the whole land of Russia upside down.' But the strangers said, one to another, 'This strength is too great for a mortal man; we must lessen it;' and they gave him to drink also. Then they asked again, 'Feel you your strength, Ilia?' And Ilia answered, 'I feel my strength, and it is but half what it was before.' 'Enough!' said the strangers, and turned to go away.

"But Ilia begged them to tell him at least who they were, that he might give thanks for them to God. And lo! the face of him who stood on the right became as that of an old white-haired man, on whose head was a crown of glory; and he said, 'I am he who died for the true faith, and my name is Peter.' And he on the left looked up, and showed a firm, dark face, above which hung a crown of glory like the other; and he said, 'I am he who preached to the heathen, and my name is Paul.'

"And then the third laid his hand softly upon Ilia's head, and said to him, 'The next time you go into the church to pray, look at the great picture above the altar, and you will know what MY name is.'

"And suddenly, as He spoke, on His forehead shone a fiery cross, which dazzled Ilia so that he shut his eyes; and when he opened them again the three strangers were gone."

And so the story proceeds through all the great deeds and wild adventures of the Slavonian Hercules, while at every word the hard features of the listeners soften more and more into a glow of genuine enjoyment. To these poor labourers, whose whole life has been one long struggle with hardship and want, it is no light comfort to be told of a Power which, in the form of one poor and unknown as themselves, once walked the earth to help the helpers and give strength to the weak. Rough and uncultured as he is there are noble qualities in the Russian peasant. His native sluggishness and coarse vices are the fruit of the benumbing system under which he has been reared; his frank hospitality and simple childlike piety are all his own. For him and for his there remains yet another emancipation from the tyranny, not of principalities and powers, but of grovelling ignorance, and brutal excess, and debasing superstition; an emancipation as far above the mere material enfranchisement of 1861 as the soul is above the body.

WILD FLOWERS.

PALE apple blossoms and red flowers,
Anemones and tulips tall,
Which light with flaming torch the showers
Of slim green leaves which round them fall,

Are smiling here, and through the rift
Of vanished years what thoughts arise,
As on each glowing bud, I lift
Dazzled and dim my wearied eyes.

The sweet-brier fragrance of your youth,
A wild, free blossom, tender, pure,
Yet rich with promise (such in truth,
Ever, to raciest fruit, mature).

The glory of our Tuscan spring,
Transparent, warm, with bloom divine,
From leaf and flower and vines which cling
From tree to tree with tendrils fine.

The teeming splendour of our plain,
A sea of verdure lost in blue;
Our curving hills, the ripening grain,
With fireflies glittering through and through,
Our old tower* whence the owls would call
Oft and again their one sweet note;
The wealth of roses on our wall,
By summer, spring, and autumn brought,

* Hawthorne lived for three months at the Tower of Montanto, Bellosguardo, and there began Transformation.

All in this pictured panel lives,
And like a charm unseals my eyes;
A spell divine a fairy weaves,
To clothe the earth with rainbow dyes.

The moonlight and the sunlight clear,
The hope, the joy which nature wore,
Life, youth, and passion, all are here,
And Italy is mine once more.

AMONG THE TIPSTERS.

I NEVER saw a race run in my life, and pretend to not even a rudimentary knowledge of horse-racing, but I confess to a great partiality for easily-earned money. A short time ago a copy of one of the sporting newspapers chancing to fall in my hands, I read in it a series of advertisements (inserted by persons who, for the most part, claimed infallibility in the selection of the winner of the Derby) of so glowing a sort, that I determined to write for their "tips," as the utterances of these prophets are styled in sporting parlance. It is not necessary that I should confess whether or no I acted on the information communicated through these channels. My experience, at all events, cost me the postage stamps which the tipsters asked as the price of their information. I leave it to the reader to judge for himself whether it was worth the money; and I leave him also the alternative of laughing at my simplicity if I went further, or of congratulating me on my caution if I let the postage stamps stand as the sum-total of my unremunerative outlay.

The following advertisement was the first that caught my eye. There was a mysterious El Dorado seeming about the figures with which it commences which was very alluring.

5059L.—GRATIS! GRATIS!! GRATIS !!!

JAMES CARTWRIGHT sent 184 winners last season to his subscribers, winning for them 5059L. Circular now ready (two stamped envelopes) containing my great double event over the Derby and Oaks at 400L. to 1L.—Address, James Cartwright, 19, Gloucester-road, Peckham, London, S.E.

I received the following reply to my application for information respecting the "great double event":

"If you look at my advertisement again you will see my terms are eighteen stamps, for which I send six winners per week for the whole season."

The reader can "look at my advertisement again," and see for himself if there is any mention in it of eighteen stamps.

The promise of long odds, the assertion of genuineness, and "one of the best things

ever known for the Derby," combined, tempted an outlay of half a crown for a reply to the following advertisement:

F. MAXWELL has one of the best things ever known for the Derby, and at long odds. The favourites will all be beaten by his selection.—Send thirty stamps and directed envelope to F. Maxwell, Carshalton, Surrey. N.B.—This being strictly genuine requires no puff.

The reply was at once emphatic and affectionate. "My dear sir," it ran, "you cannot do better than back the Sunbeam Colt and Queen's Messenger, and lay against Prince Charlie and Cremorne, as I am perfectly satisfied they have no chance."

The name of Fordham is familiar to the veriest griff in turf matters; and there was, besides, something so seductive about the "rank outsider" for a place that I had no hesitation in answering the following advertisement:

CHARLES FORDHAM wishes his subscribers to go for a raker on his selected one for the Derby. Those who are not on should send at once (inclosing thirteen stamps and directed envelope), and get on at once. C. F. will also send a rank outsider for a place, whose owner and trainer are sanguine of winning; but he will be found unequal to the task of beating C. F.'s selected one, but will certainly be in the first three.—Address, C. Fordham, Newmarket, Cambs.

The valuable selection I received for my thirteen stamps was as follows: "Back Prince Charlie to win, and Drummond a place for the Derby, to win a good stake, and please put me on a present." This must have proved awkward advice to any confiding sportsman who complied with Mr. Fordham's wishes, and went a "raker."

INVERESK! INVERESK!! SOUCAR!!!—ARTHUR WEBB'S success.—On Saturday picked Inveresk at 33 to 1 and Soucar to win the Chester Cup; Prince Charlie for Two Thousand ever since November last. Subscribers, we are as certain to win both Derby and Oaks. A horse at 10 to 1 for a place in the Derby; York winners included; six stamps.—Address, Mr. A. Webb, 292, Waterloo-road, Lambeth, London.

For such a certainty as this six stamps were a bagatelle, and I sent them, receiving, by return, a printed circular entitled The Racing Guide, in which Mr. Webb states that his information "comes from a private and confidential source, and can always be relied on." Whether, in point of fact, Mr. Webb's information is invariably to be relied on, the reader may judge from the fact that the Derby selections sent by this gentleman were "Queen's Messenger to win. Bertram, one, two, three."

He must be a poor clinker—whatever a "clinker" may be—that is dear at a penny, and I lost no time in responding to the following advertisement:

AN OUTSIDER WINS THE DERBY.—A certain clinker now at a tremendous price has just won an extraordinary trial. The trainer considers it good enough to win the Derby in a canter. The advertiser, well known on the turf, has got full particulars from a person connected with the stable. Send stamped address immediately to Mr. Alfred Day, 8, Westmoreland-road, London, S.E.

The reply (lithographed) was as follows: "I do not usually send my advice gratis; but lay the odds to one pound against Prince Charlie for the Derby (he has not the remotest chance of winning), and send and join my list. I regret to say my outsider broke down badly yesterday, and will not run; I therefore advise you to put a good stake on the undermentioned at once, knowing it to be a certainty—Sunbeam Colt, win and place. Please put me on five shillings."

GRATIS.—JOHN BURLEY guarantees to send the winners and place-horses in the Derby and Oaks, with several certainties at York and Doncaster, for four stamps and envelope. Reward me from winnings.—J. Burley, 16, Canal-street, Albany-road, Camberwell, London. Established 1865.

There was an enticing lavishness of promise in this that "fetched" my four stamps readily. The reply, having stated that "the inclosed names of horses are real good things, and ought not to be neglected if you wish to win money, and have a good start for the season," gives Queen's Messenger to win the Derby, and the Sunbeam Colt for a place. It proceeds: "Any person sending ten shillings to put on the double event of Derby and Oaks, we guarantee (by Burley's system) to return a hundred and twenty-five pounds. Mr. Burley wishes it to be understood that he does not put money on in the common every-day system, as other commission men do (whereby you would ruin the Bank of England), but on an entirely new and honourable system originated by him. No other person knows the secret. Burley's betting club system is on the same principle as practised by the leading racing men of the day." It is to be hoped—I will not say for their own, but for Mr. Burley's sake—that but few sent a remittance to be put on the double event named.

One may be shy of professional tipsters, but how was it possible to refrain from an outflow of confidence toward one advertising in a style of such pretension as this?

A GENTLEMAN of position in Turf circles will give to private gentlemen the benefit of a bonâ fide Turf secret. 10,000*l.* may be realised. Stamped address to C. H. Rawson, 3, Chatham-place, Old Kent-road, London. Derby winner, 1000*l.* to 30*l.*

Besides, the revelation of the secret pos-

sessed by the "gentleman of position" cost but a penny stamp. I sent the stamp, and got the following reply:

Drummond has only to run up to his trial to win the Derby in the commonest of canters, he having been tried many lengths better than Prince Charlie's public form: this alone should be sufficient for you to back him to win a fortune, but in addition the horse is improving daily, and belongs to the most straightforward sportsman on the Turf, and will be ridden by the most accomplished jockey of the day, G. Fordham; therefore this golden opportunity should not go by without benefiting you to the tune of a thousand. Being desirous of extending my connexion amongst sporting gentlemen residing in the country, if, after the Derby, you can introduce a few of your select friends, I shall feel greatly obliged. Terms of subscription, whole season, two guineas, including postage and telegrams.

I have not as yet seen my way to introduce any of my "select friends" to the "gentleman of position."

The next advertisement which attracted my notice was a long and florid one of the Premier Racing Circular, proprietors, Messrs. James Rawlings and Co., 65, York-place, Edinburgh." Concerning the Derby this advertisement contained the following glowing paragraph:

Over this race now-a-days it has become usual for every Briton to sport his "fiver" or "pony," and those who would land a heavy sum by so doing must stand our selection and nothing else for this event, as he will as surely cut down his field over Epsom Downs, and land the Blue Ribbon of 1872 in a common canter, as we are now penning these lines. Conscious that the probability—nay possibility—of defeat does not exist, we can consequently recommend our selection as an infallible investment alike to large and small speculators, in the full confidence that he will triumphantly carry us through in selecting our tenth Derby winner in succession. Not an hour should be lost in sending to us for these selections, as the remainder of the stable commission may go into the market at any moment, after which it will be well-nigh impossible to get on at any price, though at the present moment a good price is obtainable.

The charge for this Midas-like circular was but six stamps, in return for which I received quite a batch of documents. I quote from the Circular as follows: "Were we to write pages we could only sum up as now in four words: He, Prince Charlie, cannot be beaten; and we would use every power of persuasion we possess to induce every reader of these lines to back him to win them as large a sum as they can possibly afford, satisfied as we are that such an absolute moral certainty was never previously known in the history of the Turf. . . . The Derby is the greatest certainty for Prince Charlie ever known in the history of the Turf. . . . No one must neglect to stand this moral, as such a 'dead certainty' does not often occur." To prevent any such neglect on my part, an elaborate voucher—so much resembling a cheque that my month watered—was in-

closed, stating that my correspondents had taken for me the bet of "one hundred pounds to twenty pounds Prince Charlie to win the Derby." Although this was an unsolicited favour, I venture to trust that it has not inconvenienced my zealous and emphatic correspondents.

TO NOBLEMEN AND GENTLEMEN BACKERS WHO INVEST LARGELY.

Messrs. H. WILSON and DIXON, commission agents of Hull and Edinburgh, will bonâ fide send the winner of the Great Northern Handicap or the Epsom Derby to any gentleman who will let them stand in to win 20*l*. On receipt of a letter addressed to H. Wilson, Turf Herald Office, Hull, a telegraphic message will be sent off at once gratis.

This hardly applied to me; but in another advertisement from the same people in the same paper I found the following:

THE EPSOM DERBY.

An outsider at 40 to 1 will get a place (10 to 1 for a place). This is the very best thing we ever knew. Heard of it at Chester, and if our other selected makes the least mistake, this outsider will not only get a place but win right out.

And this with a batch of other winners was to be had for three shillings. I sent the money, received in return a printed circular, which the following passage alone concerned me:

After duly weighing up, we must come to the conclusion that Prince Charlie is not in a false position, for he has done all that has been asked of him, but then his price is not remunerative enough, therefore we have studied and searched the stables through for other animals who will pay better than backing the favourite, and we strongly recommend that Laburnum, Wenlock, and Bertram be backed for wins and places, knowing that a most clever school are going for the lot.

By another post came a piece of red tissue paper, on which it was that "each subscriber stands in to win ten shillings to nothing on Laburnum," which sum, in case of that horse winning, would be remitted. Beneath was the following: "Tip—Laburnum or Prince Charlie to win. Young Sydmonton for place. The Oaks—Delric" (sic.)

WHAT WILL WIN THE DERBY? TRY FAIRPLAY'S LONG SHOTS.

My Derby outsider at 50 to 1. Sure to be placed. Inclose two stamped directed envelopes, J. FAIRPLAY, Ipswich.

Digby Grand, Enfield, and Marmora proved what I advised.

What Fairplay's outsider has done, I for one shall never know. The following is the reply I received: "My Derby outsider will prove another Hermit; I will put anything on for you, but I will not spoil the market till the owner's commission is done." I do not habitually see my way to investing on pigs in pokes, and therefore did not accept Mr. Fairplay's offer.

Notwithstanding that I did not recognise the association between Kingsclere and Soho, I sent the requisite remittance in reply to the following advertisement:

THE KINGSCLERE TURF GUIDE contains winner of the Derby and two for places. Send twelve stamps and directed envelope to Mr. TOM WALSH, Post-office, Greek-street, Soho, London.

And duly received a little fly-leaf like a tract, which enunciated in large type the statement that "Druid or Bethnal Green will win."

The North of England Turf Guide, sole proprietors, Messrs. Grey and Wilkinson, 67, Waterloo-street, Glasgow, claimed to "contain some of the finest and most genuine information ever placed before the public. Of Messrs. Grey and Wilkinson's Derby selection, the advertisement spoke as—

One of the most genuine investments they ever knew, and it is as sure to win as this is in print, for besides being a public performer of the first class, it has been tried so highly and so satisfactorily that nothing can possibly beat it. There is no secret made by the stable, everything is as open as the day, and the heaps of money that have, and are still, being put down on their champion, shows how highly they estimate his chance of success.

The circular, which cost six stamps, gave the following information: "Not only do we feel confident of success, but look on loss as utterly impossible. Prince Charlie is sure to win the Derby; nothing can possibly beat him, and he will canter in the easiest winner ever known. We have often been confident, and with good cause too, but this is the greatest certainty ever we did know."

Probably the reader has by this time had enough of the tipsters. The "greatest certainty" ever I knew is that I have parted with about a pound's worth of stamps to very little purpose.

TWO VERY OLD SONGS.

It is the fate of many old songs to be remembered, sung, and thoroughly relished long after the names of the writers of the words, or composers of the music, or both, have been forgotten. Sometimes this obscurity results from the words or music having been frequently altered in detail, without leaving distinct trace of the original form. Sometimes the writers were men who achieved nothing else worthy of record, and never had the luck to be talked about. In other instances the song did not become popular till after the writer's death, when

the means of verification were lost. While in not a few cases uncertainty has resulted from the proneness of music publishers to issue their sheets undated, leaving it doubtful which of two old editions preceded the other in order of time.

There is a famous old school-song which is in this predicament, so far at least as the words are concerned; while the music itself cannot with certainty be assigned to one or the other of two composers who happened to possess the same name. Dulce Domum is the song here referred to. Every Winchester boy or Wykehamist—that is, every boy that has been educated at the famous old Winchester School—knows this song; and if he does not, when as an old boy he has become a bishop, judge, statesman, or general, still sing the song, he nevertheless delights to hear the annual singing of it in the old room, if opportunity leads his steps in that direction. William of Wykeham was the founder of the school; and the Wykehamists are wont to celebrate their patron by singing and dining and other pleasant observances.

What is known of this song of Dulce Domum? According to tradition, a Winchester schoolboy was once, for some misconduct, kept in when all the other boys had departed for their summer holidays. He was confined to his room, according to one story; chained to a tree in the school-ground, according to another; but at any rate he pined and pined with melancholy, thinking of home and its enjoyments, and comparing his own loneliness with the buoyant freedom of his companions. He wrote a song to relieve his sadness, and cut the words "Dulce Domum" on the bark of the tree. Drooping and declining with very hopelessness, he died before the next school-time began. Now this is a touching story, that goes to the heart of every one; nevertheless there is one weak point about it. There is not a word of sadness in the old song. It speaks of the joyous delights of a holiday, a change from the school to the home; but it says nothing of the miseries endured by a boy who has unexpectedly been shut out from participation in the pleasure. As the song is in Latin, we will not reprint all the six verses, but will give the first, to show the style:

Concinamus, O sodales!
Eja! quid silemus!
Nobile canticum!
Dulce melos, domum;
Dulce domum resonemus!

with a chorus of:

Domum, domum, dulce domum;
Dulce, dulce, dulce domum!
Dulce domum, resonemus!

There were two English translations of the song given in the Gentleman's Magazine many years ago. One of them adhered pretty closely to the metre of the original; but the other was rather a paraphrase, or imitation, in the metre called in psalm-books eights and sevens:

Sing a sweet melodious measure,
Waft enchanting lays around;
Home! a theme replete with pleasure,
Home! a grateful theme resound!
(CHORUS) Home, sweet home, an ample treasure,
Home! with ev'ry blessing crown'd!
Home! perpetual source of pleasure!
Home! a noble strain, resound!

Another imitation, sung as a breaking-up holiday song for school, begins:

Let us all, my blithe companions,
Join in mirthful, mirthful glee!
Pleasant our subject!
Sweet, oh sweet our object!
Home, sweet home, we soon shall see!

The best translation of the real Dulce Domum is considered to be that by Bishop Wordsworth, who was formerly second master of Winchester School. This we will give in full:

Come, companions, join your voices,
Hearts with pleasure bounding,
Sing we the noble lay,
Sweet song of holiday,
Joys of home, sweet home, resounding.
(CHORUS) Home, sweet home, with ev'ry pleasure,
Home with ev'ry blessing crown'd,
Home, our best delight and treasure,
Home, the welcome song resound.

See, the wish'd-for day approaches,
Day with joys attended;
School's heavy course is run,
Safely the goal is won,
Happy goal, where toils are ended.
Home, sweet home, &c.

Quit, my weary Muse, your labours,
Quit your books and learning;
Banish all cares away,
Welcome the holiday,
Hearts for home and freedom yearning.
Home, sweet home, &c.

Smiles the season, smile the meadows;
Let us, too, be smiling;
Now the sweet guest is come,
Philomel, to her home,
Homeward, too, our steps beguiling.
Home, sweet home, &c.

Roger, ho! 'tis time for starting,
Haste with horse and traces,
Seek we the scene of bliss,
Where a fond mother's kiss
Longing waits her boy's embraces.
Home, sweet home, &c.

Sing once more, the gate surrounding,
Loud the joyous measure;
Lo! the bright morning star,
Slow rising from afar,
Still retards our dawn of pleasure.
Home, sweet home, &c.

Such thoughts might have occurred to the Winchester boy before he knew that he was to be kept in; but we must perforce agree with those critics who think that the language does not betoken the broken-hearted sadness of the lad when incarcerated. However, there the words are, and the question still remains unanswered—who wrote them? Doctor Milner, writing his *History of Winchester*, seventy or eighty years ago, says, "The existence of the song of Dulce Domum can only be traced up to the distance of about a century; yet the real author of it, and the occasion of its composition, are already clouded with fable." Doctor Milner, Doctor Hayes, Doctor Busby, Mr. Malcolm, Mr. Brand, Bishop Wordsworth, Mr. Mackenzie Walcott, Mr. Chappell, Doctor Rimbault, all have written on the subject; but none have found the name of the author, or the date of composition, of Dulce Domum.

Concerning the music, there is a pretty general agreement that it was composed by John Reading, the organist; but some place it in the time of Charles the First, others in that of Charles the Second. Doctor Rimbault has pointed out that there were three musical men of this name in the seventeenth century, all organists; and that the real John Reading was probably he who was organist at Winchester during the later years of Charles the Second's reign. Mr. Chappell gives the tune in his excellent work on the *Popular Music of the Olden Time*. It is a plain, simple melody, in common time, with eight bars for the song, and eight more for solo and chorus; being easy to learn and easy to sing, it clings to the memory of those who have any local ties of attachment to it.

The song, be it written by whom it may, is sung annually at Winchester School. Doctor Busby, in his *Concert Room and Orchestra Anecdotes*, after narrating the tradition of the Winchester boy, adds, "In memory of the melancholy incident, the scholars of Winchester School or College, attended by the master, chaplains, organist, and choristers, have an annual procession, and walk three times round the pillar or tree to which their unhappy fellow-collegian was chained, chanting as they proceed the Latin Dulce Domum." The Reverend Henry Sissmore, who died about twenty years ago, at the advanced age of ninety-five, and was wont to speak of his experience as a Winchester boy in the early part of George the Third's reign, remembered the boys singing Dulce Domum

under the tree. On one occasion, finding a sort of shed built up there, they pulled it down before they began to sing; the head master, Doctor Warren, who sat on a pony hard by, enjoying the fun. The present Domum tree in the ground is not the original, but probably an offshoot from it. Mr. Mackenzie Walcott, writing in 1852, said, "At the present time, the Domum is sung on the last six Saturdays of the 'long half,' just before 'evening hills,' and daily before and after dinner, the beautiful Wykehamist graces are chanted by the choir singers." He gave an engraving of the hall, with the assembled boys singing the Domum. Mr. Chappell, some years later, stated, "Dulce Domum is still sung at Winchester on the eve of the break-up day. The collegians sing it first in the schoolroom, and have a band to play it; afterwards they repeat it at intervals throughout the evening, before the assembled visitors, in the college mead or playground."

Mr. Mackenzie Walcott, in his pleasant volume concerning William of Wykeham and his colleges, tells how affectionately the old Winchester boys regard the annual celebration: "Still in July the annual festival comes round, which commemorates the old tradition of the Domum song, and has been made the season for gathering together the family of Wykeham, drawing close again the bands of love which bind together kindred hearts. . . . Reassembling around this, their father's hearth, the rallying place of their common affections, the young and the old, all children and brothers, growing young again and unselfish, forgetting every difference of age and fortune, among the dear remembrances of boyhood. Beautiful, indeed, is it, when the school walls are gay with garlanded flowers and festooned flags, and the floors are hid with the crowds of those who come to keep the high day of Winton; when the bands burst forth in joyous melody, and the choristers and grace-singers lift up their voices, *Concinamus, O Sodales*—then the chorus and burden Domum Domum thrills through the very heart, quickens and blends all in one warm, genial, genuine flow of joy and kindliness. . . . Dulce Domum, the green home of memory in the sterile waste of years—Domum, domum, dulce Domum."

Another old song, concerning which there has been a controversy, is associated so exclusively with festive doings that we do not hear it or of it at any other time.

When a grand banquet is held, and the choice viands have gone the way of all viands, and the chairman of the evening is doing his very best (or worst) to prepare some neat speeches for health-proposing, then does this song make itself heard. *Non Nobis Domine* is, indeed, not quite a song; it is a grace after meat, something between a hymn and a prayer of thanksgiving; but very few of the guests think of it in that light. There is no controversy about the words; they are simple, and traceable to a well-known source. "*Non nobis, Domine, non nobis, sed nomini tuo da Gloriam,*" is the Latin of "*Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give the praise.*" The composer, whoever he may have been, simply took these words, and composed music to them. The tune is of the kind called a canon, in which three voices take up the subject alternately. The first goes through the words once, arranged in six bars of common time; then he goes through them again, with a different order of notes; while the second singer takes up the first part, both singing together. Then the third singer, taking his share, begins with the first line of music, and so proceeds to the end, while the other two are singing the second and third lines respectively. The three lines of music harmonise, and blend pleasantly to the ear; they are almost alike, differing chiefly in pitch or register. All the three singers, too, sing the same words, though they are not pronouncing the same syllables at the same time. This is not a very scientific way of describing the affair; but perhaps it will suffice to give a general notion of the style of composition. Some composers have a great liking for the canon, and for another and somewhat similar composition called a round. In both the voices imitate one another, observing particular rules in the imitation. A madrigal and a glee are constructed on other principles. All four kinds may be arranged for three or more voices, according to the taste and skill of the composer.

It is not, we have said, about the words of this Latin grace, but about the music, that there has been a controversy. Italy has combated with England in the matter, and the best opinion seems to be that England has won. Sir John Hawkins, in his learned *History of Music*, stated that the composition is deposited in the Vatican Library, where it is assigned to the great composer Palestrina, who composed a large quantity of ecclesiastical music three cen-

turies ago. Sir John saw a concerted piece for eight voices, by Carlo Ricciotti, which was published about a century ago; with a note stating that the subject or melody of the piece was taken from, or founded on, a canon by Palestrina; this canon he found to be *Non Nobis Domine*. Hawkins, however, proceeded to express an opinion that the canon was composed by William Bird, Byrd, or Byrde; and in this opinion he was supported by Doctor Burney and Doctor Pepusch, both, like himself, learned historians of music. In 1652, Hilton published a collection of catches, rounds, and canons, in which *Non Nobis Domine* appeared, with Bird named as the composer; but no earlier printed copy seems to be now known. If there really be a cherished copy in the Vatican Library, it is most likely in manuscript. William Bird was one of the singing boys at Edward the Sixth's Chapel, and afterwards a gentleman of the Chapel Royal, and organist of Lincoln Cathedral. Palestrina and Bird were both composing at the same time, and both composed voluminously. Anthems, services, responses, psalms, songs, fantasias, fugues, concertos, canons, proceeded in great numbers from Bird's pen.

There is some reason to believe, although the evidence is not conclusive, that *Non Nobis Domine* was composed for the Merchant Taylors' Company, to be sung at a grand banquet. The records of the company tell us that a sumptuous entertainment was given on the 16th of July, 1607, at which King James the First and his son, Henry, were present. Mr. William Byrde is named among the persons who assisted in the musical part of the entertainment. In Stow's *Annals* some of the proceedings of the day are described: "The king, during this and the election of the new maister and wardens, stode in a newe window made for that purpose; and with a gracious kingly aspect behelde all their ceremonies; and being descended into the hall to depart, his majestie and the prince were then again presented with like musique of voyces and instruments, and speeches, as at the first entrance. The musique consisted of twelve lutes, equally divided, six and six in a window on either side of the hall, and in the ayre between them was a gallant shippe triumphant, wherein were three rare men like saylors, being eminent for voyce and skill, who in their several songs were assisted and seconded by the cunning lutenists. There was also in the hall the musique of the City, and in the

upper chamber the children of his majestie's chappell sang a grace at the king's table." It is not known that there was any other musical grace in existence at that time besides *Non Nobis Domine*; and as William Bird, or Byrde, was present, and as he is credited with being the composer of the tune, there is certainly a temptation to believe that this celebrated canon must have been the one selected on that festive occasion, perchance composed expressly for the purpose. As it is a pleasant theory, we will not press hardly upon it on the score of logical proof.

ON THE EDGE OF THE MOOR.

A SOFT low-lying purple haze floats over the moor. It has been intensely hot all day, and the evening breeze has not sprung up yet. By-and-bye, when the sun (now making a sea of heather on fire in the west) has quite set, Mrs. Kane will venture a little further from the farm-yard gate to watch for the one who is coming.

Once or twice already her poor anxious old face has brightened up under the impression that she sees something moving at the vanishing point of the rugged cart-road that is the channel of communication between this farm-house on the edge of Dartmoor and civilisation. But the impression has been a false one, born of a hope that is not to be realised just yet. Indeed, reason tells her that it is idle to expect her traveller one hour before that traveller can possibly arrive.

Mrs. Kane listens to reason at last. She goes back through the farm-yard, "not so well stocked as it was when she was home last, poor maid," she thinks, with a pang of unselfish sorrow, into the cool moist red dairy. The butter has been made to-day. Butter that to-morrow will command the readiest sale in the Barnstaple market. It looks rich and firm, as her butter has always been reputed to look. But there is less of it than of old, and the weary shake of the good grey head, that has never shaken repressingly when she alone has been concerned, is at the quantity, not at the quality.

But she takes one of the plumpest pats, and fills a bowl with the richest cream from one of the flat pans, and goes away out of the dairy and into the kitchen, where a table is already well covered with country dainties. There is a chicken-pie, a shape of damson-jam, and a glass dish with a cover containing a great luscious piece of

honeycomb. There are fresh eggs, and tempting loaves of brown and white home-made bread. And as she adds the butter and cream to the display the mother hopes that "Alice will be happy, and enjoy it all."

"This'll be the air to give her an appetite," she adds, with a pleased sense of part proprietorship in the air. "The best air in the world, her poor father used to say, and he should ha' known, for he was born in it, and his father and grandfather before him, for the matter of that."

She sits down in the high handsome chair that stands on one side of the fireplace, wherein a feathery bunch of asparagus foliage is waving, or rather would be waving if there were the faintest breath of breeze to stir it. Sits down and folds her hands over the dead black Coburg dress, and smooths out the wide weepers that mark her a widow, and strives to make her loving, anxious heart beat calmly and patiently.

She looks a very gentlewoman as she sits there, her still bright dark eyes bent on the door, her soft grey hair put back plainly under the dead white border of the widow's cap. A very gentlewoman, indeed; not a lady; Mrs. Kane never wishes, never has wished to be thought to be "above her class." But a woman so full of natural gentleness and intelligence that she can never wound the feelings or the taste of any genuinely refined person.

Up to within the last three months Mrs. Kane has been one of the most capable farm-house wives in that bold, active, independent district, where the soil is made productive by incessant toil. But she has had a seizure. The brave heart that never quailed under any reverses while her husband lived, kept her up to the mark of the labour that was needful when he died. But the brain was overtaken by its sense of responsibility, and when she recovered partially from the blow that prostrated body and will for a time, her powers, her vigour, had fled, and only her indomitable perseverance remained to be the ruling spirit of the farm.

It is a freehold property this, on which the picturesque, quaint, thatched, many-gabled farm-house stands. And it has been in the Kane family for generations. If she could only go on, as she had gone on for five years after her husband's death, she might look forward to gratifying the wish that is nearest to her heart, namely, that she may be able to leave it to

Alice as her father left it. But she has been stricken down, and things have gone unkindly with the cattle and the sheep, and—"well, she has many blessings," she tells herself in a burst of heart-felt gratitude as she thinks of Alice.

There is an opportune stir in the house and about the house at this very moment. Jane—a ubiquitous and highly-gifted young person, who is cook, house and dairy-maid, superintendent of the pigs and poultry, vender of the butter, cream, and eggs, on market-days—comes stumbling in more clumsily, smilingly, amiably than is usual even with her. The yard-dog barks, and performs a war-dance at the extreme end of his chain. The cocks and hens flutter backwards and forwards across the yard in the inconsequent way natural to them when anything of an extraordinary nature occurs in their vicinity, and Mrs. Kane gets up and goes out with a little more flush on her face, a little more flutter about her hands, and looks along the road, and sees Alice.

"There was a pony-chay to fetch her the last time," the mother thinks, half-sorrowfully, as the market-cart lumbers up. But now Alice is out of the cart, embracing her mother, shaking Jane's hand, which is little less rugged than the road, patting the old dog's head, laughing and crying, and declaring herself deafened by the fowls, all in one minute.

"You're better, mother? say you're better," she says presently, when she is seated at the tea-table. There is a wistful look in her eyes, lightly as she speaks, as they take in every change, every sign of loss of power and gain of years in her mother.

"It's done my eyes good to see you," Mrs. Kane says, warmly. And indeed Alice is a sight to do other eyes than her mother's good.

Alice is what it has been allowed her mother is not—quite a lady. Quite a lady in mind and manners and appearance; quite a lady in frank, honest dignity—in the delicacy of her speech, and tone, and dress. A handsome, tall, well-formed girl, with a clear strong head, and a pure strong heart, she fully deserves all the pride her mother feels in her.

Mrs. Kane looks—she can't help looking as they move so lightly about the tea-things—at the smooth white hands that are so daintily kept and cared for. She thinks, regretfully, of how they will get roughened and embrowned in doing the

work that she has done cheerfully and gladly for so many years. But she does not put that sorrow into words yet. She resolutely twinkles away a tear, and consoles herself with the thought that it "won't be long before Robert Ford will come and take all the toil and trouble of the farm off Alice's hands."

Can Alice be thinking of the same thing? Nothing leads up to the question apparently, yet she suddenly asks:

"How are the Fords, mother dear? Is Robert married yet?"

"Married yet! why, no, you don't ask!" Mrs. Kane is so perplexed that she falls into the vulgar tongue employed by Jane during that young person's moments of amazement, which are many.

"But I do ask!" Alice says, rising up and taking the office of putting away upon herself at once. "Poor dear Rob! he's as slow about that as about everything else, I see."

"He hasn't been slow in turning over the tidy bit of money that his father left him," Mrs. Kane begins indignantly; but the indignation vanishes before the laughing bright keen gaze that is turned full upon her from behind the cupboard-door.

"Dear mother! it's so easy to turn it when once one has the tidy bit; but I'm glad to hear he has been so—lucky; and how's Dolly?"

"Dolly came here the other day with a hayrick on the back of her head, and a great wire frame over her poor hips, that she called a dress-improver." Mrs. Kane pauses when she utters this awful word, and looks as if she expected Alice to make a remark. Accordingly, Alice makes one, though she scarcely feels justified in doing so, not having given due consideration to the iniquity.

"Well!" she says.

"Well! is that all you can find to say; well, I told Miss Dolly what I thought of such folly, and what I knew you would think of such folly in a miller's daughter aping the silliness of her betters; you don't wear such things, Alice." And Mrs. Kane, as she speaks, looks at Alice's handsome head, round the back of which the hair is rolled in a thick coil, and at her straight lissom figure, about which the folds of a clear neutral-tinted muslin dress fall very softly and gracefully.

"No-o; I don't wear them, myself," Alice says, coming back with a spring, and leaning over the mother with such a joyful uncalled-for confusion in her manner, that

Mrs. Kane thinks Alice is determined to think nothing but good of Rob's pretty, silly, fair-haired sister. "I don't wear them myself, because—because I've been taught better."

"Then the ladies don't wear them in Exeter, Alice?"

Alice Kane nods her head and smiles again, and puzzles her mother by saying, "Yes, they do."

"Then Mrs. Lovell—a true lady—didn't like them?"

"Mrs. Lovell! dear mother, Mrs. Lovell wears them herself."

"And she has the charge of young girls. Well! well! and she spoils the form Heaven gave her. I never thought it of her, Alice."

There is very little more said about Mrs. Lovell or the atrocities of fashion this night, this first happy night of Alice's return home to lift the burden from her dear old mother's shoulders. Alice, the future manager, has to be made acquainted with a variety of domestic details that are new to her, farmer's daughter as she is. For Alice has been away from the house on the edge of the moor for ten years, and she is only twenty-two now. For six years she was a pupil at a good school in Exeter, and for the last five years she has been a governess in another and equally good establishment, in the same city; but she takes to the idea of all the duties that are to devolve upon her with delightful spirit, with refreshing eagerness.

"I always made the butter myself until that trouble came upon me, three months ago," Mrs. Kane says. "Jane is willing, but there's less than there ought to be now."

"And I'll always make the butter now, mother; at least, when I've learnt to make it."

"And old Baxter doesn't do with the land what your poor father did, or what I've done."

"I'll make Rob teach me what is to be done, and how it is to be done."

"Ah!" Mrs. Kane says, with a deep sigh of satisfaction, "if you have Robert's help, dear, all will be well."

"And, of course, I shall have his help," Alice answers, her head going up in slight surprise; "he'd fly to help you, or me, or Jane—or anybody else for the matter of that; it's Rob's one fault, to be stupidly good-natured."

The old homestead beautifies itself soon under Alice's auspices. The girl has saved

money from her earnings, and with it she buys another cow and new farm implements, and hires the services of an able, honest man, who owes allegiance to Robert Ford, and, therefore, does not attempt to defraud the young lady, after whose interest all men know Robert Ford will look sharply. Mrs. Kane's heart grows lighter day by day as she witnesses, and Jane testifies to, the general improvement. Nothing beautifies a house more than the heart of the head of it being light.

They are twelve miles from Barnstaple. They are six miles from their nearest neighbour, but Alice never seems dull. It had been a woeful grief to the mother when first she had been compelled to send for Alice, to think of the solitude into which her child would be plunged in this remote home of hers. But it is a grief to her no longer. Alice Kane is as free from care as the sky above or the breeze that blows over the moor on this sunny cloudless day.

Light of heart, light of foot, full of rich young health, full, too (but this her mother does not know), of a full, rich young hope, the young girl goes briskly through the round of her duties, and is never tired by them.

A deliciously invigorating healthy life it is out here on the edge of the moor. She daily gains a sense of greater freedom, a feeling of greater power, a firmer belief in her own ability to go on doing her best, and doing it successfully.

Robert Ford, who has been the slave of his love for her, and of his belief that eventually he shall have the courage to tell her of it in so many words, from the day she was eight years old, comes to see "how they're getting on" frequently. He is the nearest neighbour; but six miles is a very short distance when no one lives nearer to you.

He comes in early one day, just as Jane is about to start for the market. Alice is full of justifiable pride. She is sending more pounds of butter, more eggs, more poultry away for sale than have been sent for five years from that farm.

He is a well-built, broad-shouldered young man, with yellow hair, like his sister Dorothy's. He does not wear his hair in a haystack, but has it closely cropped all over his head. It is curly and rebellious, though. And so, whenever he comes to see his idol, he puts on it "oil enough to mix a salad with," as the idol thinks a little disdainfully.

His blue eyes are very wide open—the

very homes of candour and simplicity—simplicity untainted by any shade of folly or weakness, be it understood. Unluckily for himself they always open wider, and let out all their secrets, when they rest on Alice.

But she has not cared to find out the secrets yet. To her, Robert is a sort of human Newfoundland—a faithful, honest, strong fellow, who would be pleased to pull her, or anybody else, out, if she, or anybody else, got into the waters of difficulty. Her heart was too full of an idol she had erected at Exeter for her to respond to the heart whose idolatry he was lavishing on her. Respond to it, indeed! Purbblind Alice did not yet realise that it was lavished upon her.

He has not arrayed himself in all his bravery, believing, as the Laird o' Cockpen did, that no woman could resist that, even if she could him. He has simply put on his thoroughly good, and excessively ill-made, light-grey clothes, because it is a way of showing homage to this lady whom he loves. He would do anything for her. And her mother knows it, and loves him for his devotion to her Alice, and, practically, asks him to dinner.

"Do stay, Rob," Alice says carelessly; "Jane is gone to market, and you'll see me making a pie and peeling the potatoes; it won't be amusing to you, but it will be better than riding home under the mid-day sun."

He takes up a knife in his excess of happiness and is ready to peel a pie or make a potatoe, or do anything else that is vague and impossible. Alice, in her wonderful dress, that is not a bit like Dolly's, and that still does not look old-fashioned, steps about lightly, does her work, and forgets him.

Presently—he is standing close by the end of her table—he speaks:

"Alice!"

"Oh, Rob! I thought—I thought you had gone out with mother," she says, looking round, and missing the old lady. "I'm glad you didn't," she adds, politely, "I like to have some one to talk to while I'm making a pie!"

He sees that the girl is less collected, less careless, less absolutely in possession of herself than she ordinarily is. Nevertheless, being a man in love, he is unwary enough to proceed:

"Alice!" his face grows red through the sun-brown on it, and his blue eyes become hopelessly confiding, "Alice! you know why I come here, don't you?"

She stops and looks at him with a kindly air of interest. She has such sweet thoughts of her own, that it is by an effort only that she can compel herself to try to take in the meaning of what he is saying. Resting the rolling-pin on one end, and balancing her hand on the other, she looks at him thoughtfully, and fears, pitifully, that he is in some trouble about Dolly.

As she looks at him, in her perfect unconsciousness, the red dies out of his face and the light goes out of his hope.

"I see you don't," he says energetically. "You've taken my love and never seen it even."

She is very sorry, little as she says: for it is such a surprise to her that she can't say much. He feels that she is very sorry, but that does not take the sting out of his pain. Like a man, he wants to get himself away directly; and, like a woman, she, in her cruel kindness, can't bear that he should ride away in that sun.

"We were children together," she reminds him; "if you were to get a stroke I should never forgive myself."

"I've had my stroke already, this morning," he says, with a ghastly effort to be sprightly.

"Nonsense—nonsense—if we had only been like cousins it would have been different; but we've been like brother and sister. You'll go away and see some stranger, and adore——"

"As you have done," he interrupts her gently; but it is her turn to be red in the face and awkward in manner now.

After awhile they go out together to look for Mrs. Kane. They meet her coming from the hen-house with her apron full of eggs. Seeing them together, she is quite ready to drop the eggs and bless them, but something in the expression of Robert's face deters her.

For the first time in her life she is angry with Alice. Robert is a rich man, as riches go in this class in this part of the world; and a good man, as goodness goes in any part of it. She is not the type of mother who thinks that her daughter ought to think herself very well off to get a husband at all; but she does think that the like of Robert Ford will not come by again in a hurry.

It is rather a dull dinner of which these three partake presently. Robert Ford is not angry with Alice, but he is angry with himself for having clouded Alice's brow and Alice's heart, even for an hour. When she speaks to him, as she does constantly

and kindly, something in his throat makes his eyes water sympathetically, and then he hates himself for his weakness; for Alice, at the sight of it, evidently has an extra twinge of pain.

When he is going to ride away, in the cool of the evening—he had planned for this whole holiday for more than a fortnight—Alice stands by, patting his roan horse's neck, and bidding him gentle good-bye. She is dreadfully inclined to apologise to him, but the saving remembrance that the mistake was caused by no fault of hers steps in, and she compromises matters, between her tenderness and sense of justice, by saying:

"Rob, you'll soon come again, won't you?"

"Why? You don't want me, Alice?"

"Mother will miss you so much," she pleads; "and it won't seem like home without you and Dolly coming in and out."

"And, by-and bye, I shall find some one else here; that will be it, you know, Alice," he adds, as her face grows sunny with a happiness she would hide if she could; "and when that happens——"

"How can we tell what may happen?" she interrupts sententiously.

"I shall have all the pain to go over again, but I'll come. God bless you, Alice." He gives her hand the truest clasp it will ever have from a man. And as he rides away she looks after him, and thinks how true he is, and how good, and what a pity it is he doesn't go about more and see other girls.

"So that's settled, Alice," her mother says, as Alice goes back slowly into the room.

Alice goes up and stands close to her mother, but behind her.

"I wish you could have cared for the lad," Mrs. Kane says softly. And then Alice puts her head down on her mother's shoulders, and says:

"Mother, I must tell you now. I care too much for another lad to marry poor Rob."

Mrs. Kane is all eagerness for information; Alice the soul of candour in imparting it. But, after all, there is little to tell.

It is only another edition of the old, old story. The outspoken lover has a rival in an unspoken one. Alice has given her heart away, after the imprudent habit of young women, before it has been asked for, in so many words.

The girl does not go into ecstasies in describing him, but in spite of this reticence

the mother sees that this Mr. Guy Wyse is the hero of Alice's heart.

"He is an artist——"

"Then it's he who taught you better about dress," Mrs. Kane guesses shrewdly.

"Yes, about dress, and everything."

Then all the story of how they met comes out. Mr. Wyse was making a brief stay in Exeter, where, at an evening party, he met Mrs. Lovell, Alice, and some of the pupils. He was struck with Alice's beauty at once. He made acquaintance with Mrs. Lovell, he called, he ingratiated himself with everybody, he gave some of the girls drawing-lessons—he made studies of Alice, he showed her mutely how he loved her, and things were at this stage when Alice was recalled home.

She tells her mother all this; and then there is a long pause; at last Mrs. Kane says: "He has had time to come after you, Alice."

Then Alice grows scarlet, crimson, white, in rapid succession, and confesses:

"When we said good-bye he told me he should come to see me in two months, and asked would I promise him a welcome. I promised him one; the two months are not over yet, mother."

"And that's all?"

"That's all; but it's enough; he will come, mother."

"I wish it had been Rob that you had known the best and worst of," Mrs. Kane sighs; but Alice laughs and says:

"We shall soon know the best and worst of Guy, mother; he'll soon come."

Her words seem to be prophetic. The day after a letter reaches her from Guy Wyse. A buoyant letter, full of pleasure at the thought of seeing her so soon. He is going to stay at Westward Ho! whence he imagines he can easily run over, as he believes the farm is somewhere near Barnstaple. Will she mind writing to him, and giving him the route? He addresses her as his "dearest friend," and signs himself, "hers ever and always," and she believes him.

From the moment she answers his letter Alice grows a little better. She bounds through the round of her duties more rapidly than ever, it seems, and then gets out on the free, fragrant moor, that is still covered with heath. Some of the purple flowers have turned brown and yellow, but still, faded as they are, they make glorious patches of colour. He does not know the moor yet. How he will love its wild beauty.

She longs to see the place to which he is coming. Though she has been born and bred in this place, she has never seen far-famed Westward Ho! Mother has never seen it either. She coaxes and persuades, and they make a pilgrimage thither to see the place to which the "Happy Prince with Joyful Eyes" is coming.

There is nothing unmaidenly about Alice Kane. If she did not know that Guy would not be there for another week she would not go near Westward Ho! As it is, she sighs to see the place where he will be living during the happy days of authorised courtship that are coming—that she feels so sure are coming.

The market-cart is made comfortable with rugs and cushions for Mrs. Kane, and Alice takes the reins, and they spend three hours of a lovely autumn day in driving over the lonely rugged road to Barnstaple. On the way they meet Robert Ford, and it transpires that he has never been to Westward Ho! "And all North Devon men ought to know it, or be ashamed to think of Charles Kingsley!" Alice says with enthusiasm. Then she adds, "Come, Rob," and he comes.

Being next to her he feels that he is steaming through Paradise as they go by train from Barnstaple to Instow. Alice feels that she is in Paradise too—but not because she is next to Rob. Mrs. Kane likes the present aspect of things too well to worry herself about the future. This is the first holiday she has had for years. It will be grand to see the spot about which such a book has been written!

At Instow the two young people find a fairy boat and boatman ready to waft them over the stream to Appledore, where a glorified pony-carriage is procured to take them through Northam to Westward Ho!

This (to her) abrupt transition from the isolation of her dear old home on the moor, to the life and excitement of pony-carriage-driving down the road, and avenues running up from it to lovely mansions before which peacocks and ladies are walking, is bewildering to Mrs. Kane. She likes it, but it makes her sleepy. She closes her eyes, and Alice and Rob are presently as much alone as if the mother were back at the farm-house.

"There's a reason for this, isn't there, Alice? 'tisn't only a holiday," Rob says softly.

Alice turns her face towards him frankly. Slightly shaded as it is by the sailor's hat he sees it in all its radiance.

"There is a reason, Rob; I do want to see Westward Ho!"

"Some one you love has been there?"

"Some one I love is coming," she murmurs, and she is half-proud, and half-ashamed.

Bob is only a miller; his grammar is often defective; his pronunciation is always so; but he is a very knight of purity. The fear that Alice's lover may be there already, never crosses his mind for a moment.

So they go on and on till they meet that other fresh breeze which is so different to the wind that blows over the moorland—the breeze that comes over the sea.

They get down to the hotel presently, and find it full of life, and the savour that greets them reminds them that they are very hungry. So they have dinner, and then Mrs. Kane goes to sleep, and Alice and Rob go out for a walk.

The pebble ridge is a marvel, but a fatiguing one to surmount. They soon have enough of that. They get out on the Northam Burrows, where several detached parties are out playing golf. If you do not happen to have your head cracked by a ball winging its elegant way in utter obliviousness of your existence, this is a delightful game to witness. Alice has never seen it before, and so flings herself into the spirit of it as she watches, and thinks what pretty pictures Guy will make of some of these pretty girls by-and-bye.

They stroll about for an hour. Rob refrains from making love, and Alice is very happy in the thought that the next time she comes here it will probably be with Guy, as his bride perhaps. They will spend a good deal of time in the old home, of course, and when they are away she will leave a pair of paragons to look after the farm and her mother. Then she remembers Rob, and asks a little timidly:

"Have you ever been to London, Rob?"

Robert shakes his head. He never has been. To the best of his belief he never shall go, now.

"Not if I ever live there, Rob?" (You cat without design, playing your hapless mouse so unconsciously). "Surely, if I ever live there, Rob, you'll come to see me."

Rob is about to answer plaintively, but a golf-ball whizzes by, and he is compelled to perform a leap in the air to avoid it. Instead of being plaintive, when he comes down, he is penitential.

"Let us get away from here, Alice; there is some wild playing going on with those two over there."

"Which two?" Alice asks, and Rob indicates a Dolly Varden dress, and a shooting-costume in the distance. That is all Alice can see. So she laughs, and says:

"A bridegroom and his bride, I should say. Blind to everybody else, they may knock one's head off, as you say."

"You were saying," he begins, as they turn to walk back to the hotel, "that if you ever lived in London you'd like to see me. Is it there you're to live, Alice?"

"I don't know—I know nothing, Rob. Can't you understand that I feel sure without knowing?"

Yes; he can understand. He can understand only too well. The understanding stabs him with pain, but he bears it like a man, and answers:

"I suppose he's very different to all we down here?"

Alice thrills to the tone of misery. Keenly alive as she is to the difference between her handsome, refined, smooth-spoken lover, and this rough diamond by her side, she will not point it.

"He is like you in one thing, Rob; he is very true and good," she says in a low voice. Then she adds, with an effort, "You must not take it all for granted yet—it may be a long time yet. Didn't I tell you I felt sure without knowing—he and I are both so young."

The exigencies of golf have brought the Dolly Varden dress and the shooting-costume right into the path they must cross to get back to the hotel. Alice and Rob are sauntering on in chat that is pleasant and confidential to the one, agonising and tantalising to the other. They are a handsome, striking pair; and the little lady in the Dolly Varden dress points them out to her companion with an admiring laugh.

"Look there, dear! Are they like ourselves, I wonder!"

He looks! The handsome pair are near to them now; and Alice is standing still, with a whiteness spreading over her beautiful face.

"By Jove! it is—it is!" The gentleman in the shooting-costume tries his hardest to be easy. "It is Alice Kane. My dear old friend let me introduce you to my wife, Mrs. Guy Wyse." Then, as Alice recovers her breath and her colour, he adds: "I didn't tell you I should bring a

companion with me to Westward Ho! I meant this as a surprise."

"It is a surprise!" Alice says simply, as she shakes hands cordially with the golden-haired bride.

Mr. Guy Wyse has more than a slight idea of how things really are with Alice. He has done his best to make them what they are; and if it had not been for a sudden fancy for this pretty creature by his side—seen for the first time since he parted with Alice—all would have ended as Alice had a right to expect. He is a very slender, refined-looking, handsome young man. He is not naturally heartless, and he would like now to call Alice "a poor little thing, and hope she'd be happy with that stalwart young fellow." But Alice is half an inch taller than himself, and feeling that half inch keenly, he feels that he can't call her a "poor little thing."

Mrs. Kane wakes up presently, and hears that it is time to be going home. She tells Alice that she knows she (Alice) is overtired.

Alice's answer is brief:

"Guy Wyse is here with his wife, mother; don't say anything."

"May I say I'm glad for Robert's sake?"

Alice shakes her head.

"He is so grieved; don't be glad that he has my sorrow as well as his own to think of now; that is the only difference it will make to him, mother."

They go back, in the chill autumn night air, that does not make one of them think of Paradise, to the old home on the edge of the moor.

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